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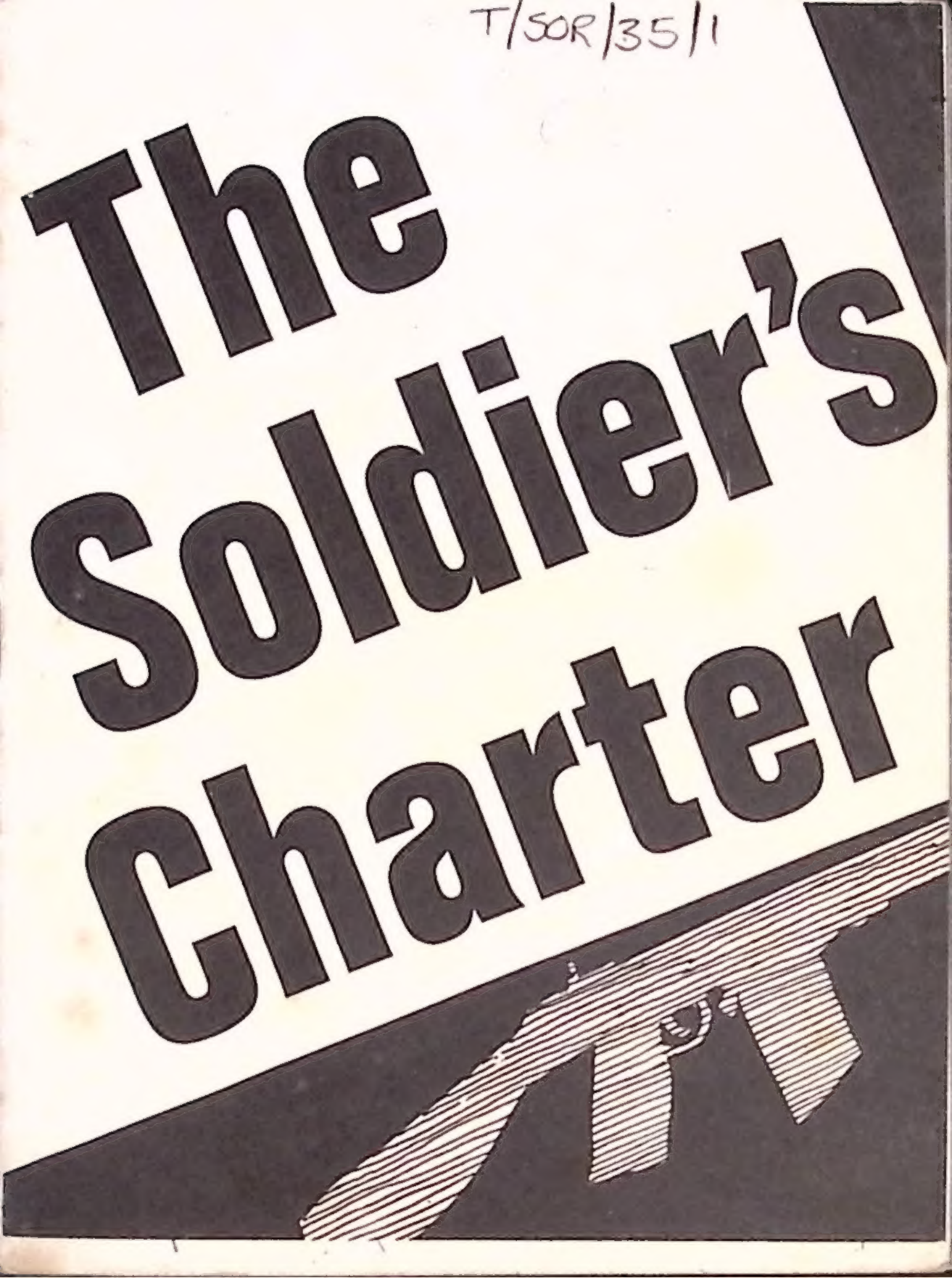
The Soldier's Charter



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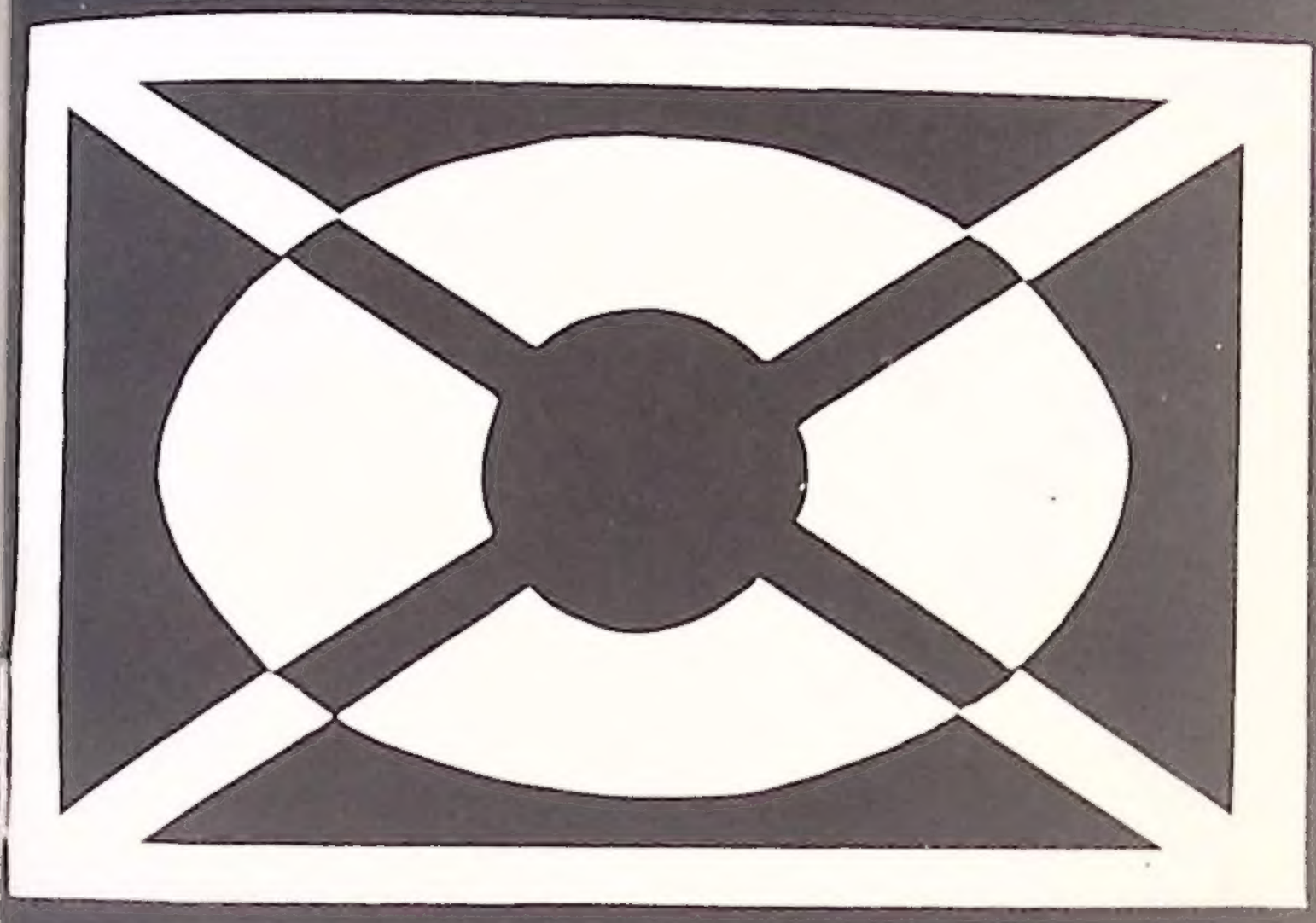

Soldiers' Trade Union Rights Movement

An Address to the Labour Party Members and the Trade Union Movement

This document is, to our knowledge, the first of its kind to be written from within the armed forces. For this reason the facts contained in it may not be easy to verify. Unless readers have had recent service experience, they will have very little to compare it with—other than official army propaganda. We simply lay out here the facts as we believe them to be, giving our reasoned opinions as to the position of the ordinary soldier in the army today and what can be done about it.

The following pages were written by serving soldiers, with very little editing by the publishers. The basic material was a mass of notes and anecdotes written down from memory, much of which for reasons of space we have had to leave out. A separate document on soldiers' wives and children—the treatment of women in the army, education facilities for children etc—is being prepared. Almost everywhere we have kept to the words we were given, sometimes changing the person, always omitting details which might have led to identification and victimization of the authors, and occasionally reproducing passages in quotation marks in full.

We thought long and hard about 'how far we should go'. Some have advised us that it would be better to 'keep politics out of it' and concentrate on questions of civil liberties alone. Our soldier friends themselves have convinced us that such an approach would be a mistake. The more 'cautious' the labour movement is in discussing the question of the Army, the less likely we are to

gain any real support from the ranks. To win respect, the labour movement must stand up for itself and show a determination to accomplish its aims. The mass of the Army will incline towards Labour when it becomes convinced that we are not merely grumbling and demonstrating but are fighting for real power and have some chances of winning it.

In consultation with members of the Labour Party Young Socialists and the Young Chartists nationally, the authors of this document, all of them young soldiers, have formed a 'Soldiers' Trade Union Rights Movement'. This will seek support from Labour organizations throughout the country and spearhead the growing movement within the army for civil liberties and the right to organize. The publication of this document today marks the first public appearance of this movement, although in their own way the founders have been taking action within the army for a period of several months. The 'Citizen'—weekly organ of the Labour Party in Leeds—carried an article in its February 5 issue describing the circumstances under which we first came together.

To see this document in its wider context we can go back to July 1969—the date the Transport & General Workers' Union's National Government Officer, John Cousins, wrote to Denis Healey (then Labour Minister of Defence) requesting him to consider the possibility of allowing the Union to recruit members of the Forces. The reply (from Roy Hattersley on the Minister's behalf) was widely quoted in the Press at the time.

It confirmed Cousins' contention that

> 'the law does not prohibit a Serviceman from joining a trade union providing he undertakes no obligation other than the payment of his subscription.'

But concerning the 'radical change' proposed by full trade union membership and the establishment of a Whitley Council for Servicemen—the Minister could 'hold out no prospect that it would be acceptable'. It would

> 'seem to imply the recognition of the twin principles of collective bargaining and the right to withdraw labour . . .
>
> . . . A Serviceman who withdrew his labour could be charged with failure to obey a lawful command. A group of men who took strike action might be charged with mutiny. This position is based partly on the Service Acts and partly on the powers of the Royal Prerogative.'

As if the Service Acts could not be reviewed and the 'powers of the Royal Prerogative' curbed by a party with the majority in Parliament! The Labour Minister's reply illustrated perfectly the habit of submission and hypnosis of class-domination which in our view as Labour Party members—have characterized our Party since its foundation. So much courage had we last time we were 'the Governing Party' that we scarcely dared breathe lest the ruling edifice might tremble, even citing the 'Royal Prerogative' as an obstacle to the recruitment of soldiers into the trade unions—a step which would

immeasurably strengthen our whole movement!

In fact, the Defence Minister's response to the T&G was a disgrace. Apart from Labour's elementary duty towards the defenceless soldiers themselves, is it seriously suggested that a sociailist society can be brought into being with the armed forces in their present state—insulated from the people and forced blindly to obey their superiors? How can the working-class take power without winning the soldiers to our side?

It is not only a question of struggle for socialism. Even our existence as a movement cannot be considered secure—particularly in view of Britain's political and social crisis today—as long as the whole armed power in the country is entirely controlled by an un-elected caste of officers whose prime loyalty is not to democracy or even to Parliament but specifically and solely to 'the Crown'. John Cousins declared (Times, 25/2/70) that 'the unionization of the services would make the possibility of a military coup d'etat more remote'. And he was right. The real danger of a 'mutiny' today comes not from the ordinary soldiers who make up the mass of the Army but from the tiny military-bureaucratic clique who control them and who are linked by a thousand threads to the aristocracy and the property-owning class. The only guarantee for the labour movement against the sort of 'blind obedience' of soldiers which leads to military coups and dictatorship is a powerful trade union movement in the Army. With soldiers' committees and the right to organize, the army ranks will be in a position to think for themselves.

They could refuse to be used against our movement in, for example, a General Strike held to prevent an extreme right-wing regime from smashing democracy and trade unionism in this country. In this context, the question of trade union rights for soldiers can be seen as more than simply a matter of Labour's duty to a long-neglected section of the working-class. It is also a matter of elementary self-interest in securing the future of our movement.

Of course, the argument that in an army the ranks must be prepared to obey orders is a strong one. But in fact, it is not one which soldiers are seriously questioning. It is simply a matter of who gives the orders and on what basis. Even with all officers elected by the ranks (an absolute precondition for a democratic army in a socialist society) the officers, once elected, would have the absolute right to command. The soldiers could have confidence in their leaders, they would understand the reasons for commands, and the question of strikes would not arise. It is the present army system which our soldier friends have lost confidence in. Give them a democratically-controlled army, a real army of the people, with its members participating in production, its officers elected by the ranks and its whole structure integrated with the democratic institutions of the labour movement—and they will back it and fight for it with everything they have.

In the meantime it should be realized—as this document shows—that ordinary soldiers have to put up

with working conditions which no self-respecting shop-steward in industry would tolerate for a single day. It is the responsibility of our leaders in the Labour Party and trade unions to see that something is done about it. Until they do, we will act as seems necessary ourselves.

Chris Knight
Young Chartists National Committee Member
May Day, 1971

Structure and Organisation

The aim here is to show how the army operates, not, at this stage, to raise criticism.

IMPERIAL GENERAL STAFF
(controlling the RAF, RN and army)
ARMIES WITHIN THE ARMY
(eg the former '8th army' of N Africa; BAOR)
CORPS
(the number of corps within an army varies)
DIVISION
(again, this varies: BAOR is the British corps and comprises 1 Divn, 2 Divn, + ½ of 4 Divn)
BRIGADE
(approx. 3 per Div., + echelon of stores, medicals etc.)
REGIMENT/BATTALION
(depending on whether Artillery, Infantry, Armour etc.)
BATTERY COMPANY SQUADRON
(av. of 4 per Regiment or Battalion)
TROOP
(3 per Battery, Company or Squadron)
SECTION
(mainly Infantry units; 2 per troop)

The above is a breakdown of the command units in the army; the chain of command as opposed to rank.

The private soldier is more directly controlled within the Company/Battery and the troops which make it up. The command which the Battalion or Regiment has over him is often remote, but by nature of the fact that the camp will be occupied by approximately 500 men, geographical nearness allows of some control.

Above Battalion/Regimental level there is NO connection with the common soldier; the units are entirely officer dominated and the soldiers operate the machinery (as clerks, drivers, etc.).

The potential power of the working class is thus at Company or Battery level. To try to form Brigade committees would be useless.

We now turn to the rank structure.*

The Rank Structure*

(a) *Officers*

Field Marshal	General Officers		Officers' Mess
General			
Lieutenant-General			
Major-General			
Brigadier			
Colonel	Staff Officers	Field Officers	
Lieutenant-Colonel			
Major			
Captain			
Lieutenant			
Second Lieutenant			

* This is only a basic guide; some ORs' titles vary according to corps. Appointments may also carry a title, eg
WO1 = RSM (Regimental Sergeant-Major)
WO2 = BSM (Battery Sergeant-Major)
or CSM (Company Sergeant-Major)

(b) *Other Ranks*

Warrant Officer (class 1) (WO1)	Sergeant Majors	Warrant Officers	Senior Ranks
Warrant Officer (class 2) (WO2)			
Staff Sergeant			
Sergeant			
Corporal	Junior NCOs	NCOs	Junior Ranks
Lance Corporal			
Private			

N.B.: Sergeants and above: SERGEANTS' MESS.
Corporals and Lance Corporals: JNCOs' MESS.
or
Corporals, Lance Corporals and Privates:
JUNIOR RANKS' CLUB.

For every man at the front there are many more behind. We can class the army under these headings:

(i) Support Arm, and
(ii) Teeth Arm.

(i) *Support Arm*

Comprising:

RAOC	Royal Army Ordinance Corps (Stores)
RCT	Royal Corps of Transport
RAMC	Royal Army Medical Corps
RADC	Royal Army Dental Corps
RAEC	Royal Army Education Corps
RAPC	Royal Army Pay Corps
RMP	Royal Military Police

ACC	Army Catering Corps
REME	Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers
RE	Royal Engineers (with Teeth Arm)
WRAC	Women's Royal Army Corps
RSig	Royal Signals
QARNC	Queen Alexandra's Royal Nursing Corps

and others

The other, more important part (at least from the point of view of war), is the

(ii) *Teeth Arm*

(a) Infantry. (The Guards, Welsh Regiment, The King's Own, Royal Regiment of Fusiliers, etc.). This comprises all the old units with long histories and traditions. It is here that the problems discussed later have their worst consequences.

(b) Royal Artillery. (RA) These regiments are numbered and titled with their weapons, e.g. 14 Field Regiment, RA; 39 Missile Regiment, RA.

(c) Armoured Corps. This is the Royal Tank Regiment plus all the old cavalry units, e.g. 17/21st Lancers; 5th Hussars.

There is a difference in the role, and consequently in the way of life, between the support and the teeth arms.

The Support Arm consists of units which, to a large extent, perform their normal functions both in peacetime and war. The RAOC still provides stores for the RCT to transport; the RAMC runs hospitals, and the REME has its vehicles to maintain.

This is not the case with the Teeth Arm. Its role is to fight, and so in peacetime it is at its closest to its proper role when out on exercises.

When any unit is performing its normal role the relationship between officers and men is a working one, and therefore the differences are reduced to a scale near to that of the normal management/worker relationship in industry.

From this it can be seen that the army system is at its worst in the normal day-to-day life in a teeth arm unit. It is here that the support for and the strength of soldiers' committees will be.

There are also geographical differences in this; the situation is at its worst in the 'last outposts of the Empire' such as the far east and BAOR.

Discipline

If any individual commits a serious offence, it would proceed along the various 'courts' in this way:

(i) *Company Commander's Orders* (Major)

The CC (Company Commander) is both judge and jury. The accused's Troop Commander is present. The accused, 'evidence', and escort are marched in by the Company Sergeant-Major.

(ii) *Commanding Officer's Orders* (Lt.-Colonel)

As above, only the CO is present, and the RSM does the marching in.

At this point, a summary or 'abstract of evidence' may

be ordered (i.e. all the evidence to be presented at the 'trial' must be committed to writing for further consideration).

For the serious or moderately serious offence it would then go:

(iii) *The DCM* (District Court Martial)
The President = Major
The Members = Two Lieutenants or Captains
(These form the judge and jury)
The Defending Officer
The Prosecuting Officer

At this level the accused and escort are allowed to sit. The witnesses are called to give evidence.

OR a more serious case would go (instead) to

(iv) *The GCM* (General Court Martial)

Here, the only difference from a DCM is that:
The President = General Officer
Members = Five Majors or below

Out of every 100 charges made:
70 are dealt with by the CC
29 are dealt with by the CO
1 is dealt with by the DCM

(Our own estimate.) The GCM is so rare as to be almost unheard of.

Crimes, too, can be split into two separate categories:
(a) Civil Offences: e.g. theft, rape, murder, embezzlement, speeding, drunken driving, etc.

These sorts of offences are usually dealt with by the

CO or DCM. Here, people are either acquitted or found guilty, and justice is done to nearly the same extent as would be the case in a civilian Magistrates' Court. (The maximum sentence which a CO can 'award' is 28 days' detention and a heavy fine. The CC cannot give detention).

(b) Military Offences: e.g. insubordination, disobedience, failing to salute an officer, threatening a superior, and perhaps the most important is: Section 69 of the Army Act: 'Conduct prejudicial to good order and military discipline.'

These are offences which would not be considered as such in civilian life. The greatest number of these charges is dealt with by the CC or CO and the object is not to establish justice, but to maintain and enforce discipline.

We have never known such a case to be dismissed. The primary object of the CC or CO is always to 'back up' the individual who is bringing the charge. If a CC or CO does think that the charge brought up is unjust, then he may deal lightly with the offender, but he will never clear him. It is a widely held belief that to overrule such a charge would be a vote of 'no confidence' in the superior bringing the charge.

The fundamental wrong here is that in civilian life the police and the judiciary are completely separate bodies, whereas in the army they are the same, i.e. the establishment. This means that whatever a soldier is told to do, that he must; to refuse to obey or not to comply exactly with the command or order is of course

'disobedience'. To argue is 'insubordination' and to fail to do it properly is 'conduct prejudicial to good order. . . .'

There are many ways in which discipline can be enforced without resorting to charging people. Private soldiers can be, and often are, victimised when the sergeant comes to detail men for fatigues; even in the 'modern army' roads have to be swept, dishes have to be washed, the cookhouse has to be scrubbed, waiters are needed for the officers' and sergeants' messes, dustbins have to be collected and emptied, fire-pickets and guards sentries have to be found. Many of these duties are unnecessary, but the army is under no pressure to be efficient and make the best of its manpower. Rotas for such unpleasant and unpopular jobs are often run, but there is no rule which is written down to this effect. Any soldier who refused to accept the duty, for whatever just cause there might be, would, strangely enough, find himself on all the dirty jobs, day after day. In theory, he could make a re-dress to his CC but any attempt to do so would only mean that he would be even further victimised. We have known hundreds of these cases but have never known of anyone attempting to make redress. The private soldier resigns himself to his position and shrugs — 'you can't buck the system'.

Even if the victimisation is not intentional, the power is in the hands of the senior ranks and officers. Power is so absolute over their men that they often operate in a high-handed manner without ever realising it.

Here is a typical example:

'A private soldier was given only one week's notice that he was to go away on a course for three weeks. Two weeks after he had returned from the course, he was told that he would be away somewhere else for a further six weeks. He eventually returned to the camp on a Friday, only to find that he was detailed for a duty which lasted for a week, and for which he was confined to camp. He didn't even think of protesting.'

Here is another example, in which a protest was actually made:

'Three men were detailed for a duty which, since they had done a similar one only two weeks before, they complained about to the CC. They were told that it was not a soldier's job to ask questions, but to do his duty. The next morning they accordingly reported for the duty — drunk. They were arrested, sentenced to 28 days' detention, and, immediately after their release, found that they were on another "dirty duty" beginning on the Monday.'

The stereotyped picture of the loud-mouthed sergeant-major bawling 'Yew bloody 'orrible shower' at the men is a very true one. Many sergeants and warrant officers address their men in this way, and the expression 'Get a few BODIES to . . .' is both typical and common.

The annual fitness test is a ten-mile march, which *all* army personnel are supposed to do. (Some, of course, do not. . . .) We know of an incident in which a very long serving senior NCO said light-heartedly to a senior officer, 'Shall you be doing the march tomorrow, Sir?'

The said officer did not look at the soldier, but said coldly, 'You've only just got that tape, ——, it would be a pity to lose it now.' The soldier in question had just been promoted — after 17 years!

A private was given some sort of a job to do and left to get on with it. The sergeant who had given him the job returned some time later and found that progress was not to his liking. After calling the man a 'useless spastic' he put him to cleaning out the toilets for the next three weeks. Examples such as this could be quoted ad infinitum.

Army policy is that 'work of an unpleasant nature should be shared as evenly as possible' among the lowest ranks, though no law exists to ensure it. Even if it were to exist, it would not be put into practice, since the sergeants, etc. would have their own idea as to what was 'fair'. The only way that any level of justice could be introduced into these cases is by soldiers' committees, which would be represented at all Orders and Courts Martial; right of appeal, and freedom of expression in the mass media; in other words, a strong trade union's protection is needed.

Often, well-meant changes in policy are never put into operation at 'shop-floor level'. This is because all rules are open to be interpreted as the individual wishes, and these people, as stated before, are always supported in their interpretations.

'Queen and country' still play a major part in the discipline of the army.

'I knew of an officer who ordered a married corporal

to go on a five-week course at 20 hours' notice. The soldier's wife was new to BAOR and had only arrived a few days earlier. They had a private flat, some considerable way away, since there was no army quarter available. The soldier explained this to the officer, and said that he didn't want to go. He received a reply to the effect that "The Queen's always the first lady in a soldier's life; your wife will have to get used to that idea, just as mine has." Whenever he made remarks along the same lines those who heard him would smile to themselves. The officer was still living in a pre-war world.'

'In the local army cinema, "The Queen" appears at the beginning of every performance. As the audience shuffles to its feet there is always a mutter of voices. One evening the muttering was shattered by the voice of a senior officer. He was standing to a bolt upright attention, and as he was doing so he had shouted "Stand still and shut up". The cinema was quite full and many men were there with their wives and families. The first reaction of the crowd was to stop talking instantly, which lasted for about three seconds, until their conscious minds realised what had happened. Then, while those in recognisable proximity of the officer stayed quiet, those "out of range" began to laugh and whistle. The overall result was that he made a complete fool of himself. Only those in fear of reprisal — i.e. those whom he could actually see — obeyed his orders. The remainder thought he was an idiot, and felt safe enough to say so.'

Some entrances to buildings are reserved for officers

only. The Other Ranks are supposed to use the less impressive 'tradesmen's entrance' at the rear. Over a period of time, the lower ranks are apt to become careless of this rule so from time to time the RSM attacks the problem and clamps down heavily on offenders.

'I had been away from my unit for some weeks, and during my absence the RSM had had a purge on Doors. I was unaware of his latest efforts on the subject, and was unfortunate enough to bump into him, as it were, on my way out of an illegal door. Like many others, I had been using this door for a number of months without anyone taking offence. This time, I immediately guessed from his glassy expression that something was wrong, so I cheerfully said "Good morning, Sir!" He ranted and screamed for a while about my being a disgrace to the British Army, not fit to be wearing my rank, etc., and asked me if I had been at the last mess meeting (held while I was away). I said no and explained why. He barked that that was no excuse (for not knowing!) and gave me four extra twenty-four hour duties.'

The soldier concerned had, of course, no right of redress and to have refused to do the duties would have been inconceivable. At the merest hint of resistance he could have been stripped of his rank and made to suffer the accompanying substantial loss in pay. This again may be only a 'minor' incident, but it gives a good picture of the kind of class-system and grievances which ordinary soldiers have to put up with in the name of 'discipline'.

The Mess System

(a) The Officers' Mess (all units)
(b) The Sergeants' Mess (all units)
(c) The JNCOs' Mess (about 70 per cent of units outside UK)
(d) The Soldiers' Canteen (all units)

N.B.: All information will be based on a normal Teeth Arm unit of Regimental/Battalion strength; i.e. approximately:

35 OFFICERS,
60-70 WO's and SGTS,
100 JNCO's,
400 PRIVATE SOLDIERS.

In groups (a) and (b), the members of the messes live in the mess if they are unmarried or separated (temporarily or permanently) from their wives. Thus they eat, sleep and base their social activities there.

As for the junior ranks, they sleep in the barrack blocks, eat in the central cookhouse, and base their social activities in (c) or (d). Group (c) is not a 'legally constituted' mess as is the case with (a) and (b). The NAAFI canteen provides facilities for the junior ranks and (c) is usually a separate room inside the NAAFI building.

We will now examine each mess in turn.

(a) *The Officers' Mess*

This is generally the largest and most impressive building in any camp, with its own gardens and well-kept flower beds, private tennis courts, and the atmosphere

of a five-star hotel. The interior has the somewhat masculine 'stately home' look, with ornately-framed portraits of distinguished officers, battle honours, and sparkling silver trophies bedecking the walls.

The ante-room is like the stereotyped ideal of a London club: polished wooden parquet floors, thick pile carpets, and an immaculate and luxurious bar; but grandest of all is the dining room. A huge mahogany table dominates the scene, and the elaborately-ornamented chair at its head is reserved for the Colonel.

Such a mess would have a soldier staff of about 10, in addition to some five civilians, who would be cooks, cleaners, barmen and waiters. The day-to-day running would be controlled by a senior sergeant. (It must be stressed that these soldiers do *nothing else* beyond their duties in the officers' mess. They are thus provided entirely free by the British taxpayer.)

Such surroundings are the setting for the most elegant and refined pre-Victorian parties and soirees for officers and their ladies.

When an officer is posted away from his regiment, the occasion is celebrated by a 'dining out' of the individual concerned. This is a compulsory stag mess dinner for all officers; the dress is mess uniform (military dinner jacket and trousers), medals and spurs.

After dinner, champagne gives way to stronger spirits, and the public school type of masculine 'good clean fun' is encouraged. Rugger in the dining room, jousting on each others' backs with broom handles, sliding down staircases on upturned tables and throwing the youngest

officer into the fishpond are to name but a few of the academic achievements of the inmates. Another pursuit which has grown in popularity is the Initiative Test, in which all the young officers have to go and fetch something from the camp — e.g. a soldier from the Guard, a Private's bed (at 2 a.m.), or 'de-bag' another officer and fly his underwear from the unit flag-pole.

In the morning a private on fatigues is then ordered to return the toys to their normal positions. No disciplinary action is ever taken, as this is only 'high spirits' which is good for morale. (Whose morale? . . . you may well ask.)

(b) *The Sergeants' and Warrant Officers' Mess*

This is another impressive building as a rule, but the tennis courts and neat gardens are absent. The genteel atmosphere of the officers' mess is replaced by a disciplinarian face. The focal point in this establishment is the bar. as opposed to the dining room in the previous case. In many ways it is a cheaper, nastier version of the officers' mess; the living-in members have their own rooms, as do those of the officers' mess, but the furnishings are generally poorer and there is no carpet on the floor. Here there are no 'high spirits', but a reverence of God, Queen and Country.

The guardian and preserver of this morality is the RSM (Regimental Sergeant-Major). All members of the mess are subject to his discipline. There is no feeling of social injustice here, as these are older men who have (usually) seen a fair number of years' service, and who

(obviously) have accepted the disciplines and injustices of the sergeants' mess in particular and the army system in general. (All the others left years ago.)

The obedience exhibited by these men to mess rules is inconceivable to anyone outside the system. No one would think of removing his jacket in the mess, or loosen his tie, regardless of the heat. Of course, if the RSM gave the order to remove jackets, then all would immediately do so:

'A young sergeant in a striped shirt and flowery tie (but wearing a suit) went into the crowded bar of the mess one Saturday evening, and the RSM shouted (always to be taken literally, this verb,) at him for all to hear: 'Get out of my mess, and don't come back till you're properly dressed".'

The sergeants' mess is also manned by soldiers, though this time only about five are involved. Two or three civilians may also be employed. Casual labour in the form of fatigue men is used for cleaning toilets and washing dishes.

(c) *The JNCOs' Mess*

As has already been said, this, if it exists at all, is not really a mess, but a bar-room in which potential sergeants may receive some experience and training in mess life. The eating and sleeping quarters of JNCOs are only very rarely separated from those of the private soldier.

For this reason we shall deal with the junior ranks as a block, and this will be done by considering the head-

ings of eating, sleeping, and social activities, taking the latter first.

(a) *'Social' activities: The NAAFI Canteen*
This is generally a room no bigger than the officers' mess dining room. All too often it is a place with no decoration (except for a portrait of The Queen, which is hung out of reach). Its furniture comprises chairs and tables; its job is to sell beer, sandwiches and pies to up to 500 men.

The staff behind the bar are all civilian employees of NAAFI. Strict opening and closing hours are therefore adhered to, and the place is usually cleared by the Orderly Sergeant:

'In BAOR, while spirits are cheap, there is a complete lack of other social facilities. When the private soldier can escape the discipline of the day he heads for these spartan surroundings with his friends. The establishment and its administrators do not respect him. Nor do they credit him with any intelligence — only the desire to be drunk. This of course is exactly what he does. I have never seen so many young men (18-24 years) be so incapably drunk as often as they can. Men who had never been drunk in their lives before are being carried out of the canteen night after night, after three months in BAOR. This is a place where women never go and fights are not uncommon.'

(b) *Eating: The Cookhouse*
This is a central building which serves three meals a day to up to 500 men. It is usually superficially clean and

the walls, door, and window-frames are painted regularly. Yet beneath the hot plates and fixed furniture will often be (abroad especially) evidence of cockroaches and mice. The furnishings are plain tables 2 ft. 6 ins. square, and tubular metal chairs.

Food is usually plentiful but very poorly cooked, and served in the most unappetising combinations (mashed potato, fried egg and beans, for example). At meal times the doors are kept locked up to the last minute, with the result that when they are opened an animal-like fight develops to reach the front of the queue and secure the best possible choice. (The better cuts of meat are in extremely short supply; consequently the goal of the majority is to reach the twenty or so chops/chicken legs, etc. first. After that it's back to the eggs and beans.)

The Orderly Sergeant is again in attendance to keep the men well-behaved. In many units NCOs stand at the entrance to the cookhouse to turn away people with dirty hands or cutlery.

In many cookhouses there are insufficient plates to go round, and 10 minutes after the start of the meal men walk among the tables trying to whip one away as its owner finishes with it.

There are no proper salt and pepper pots (unless the Brigadier is paying a visit), so large tins are put out on some tables which once again results in competition to get hold of them. Men take their own knife, fork, spoon and mug to meals, for the officers say that if they were provided with them in the cookhouse they would be stolen. (Some units however do seem to manage to do

this. . . .)

Bread is usually plentiful, but because of the policy by which the oldest stock is always used first, it is often speckled with green mould. The Orderly Officer in attendance asks somewhat patronisingly for complaints at each meal, and though he may receive several, he rarely takes action on them.

The cookhouse is staffed by 10-15 army cooks and three or four civilians, plus about four fatigue men who wash dishes, clean floors, etc.

The animalistic behaviour at the average cookhouse is of course a self-fulfilling prophecy, in that the men behave as they are expected to behave, and then are blamed for it.

When a senior officer from outside the regiment inspects the cookhouse (three to four times a year), the picture is very different, and the impression is one of a well-run Lyons cafeteria.

An officer who asked the men what the food was like, could receive the answer: 'Good today, Sir, but you ought to come back tomorrow. . . .'

(c) *Sleeping: The Barrack Block*

This is the sleeping accommodation provided for Corporals, Lance-corporals, and Privates. In some cases it is a large room for 30-40 men; in others, two to three men. The average may be six to eight per room. Each man has a steel-framed bed, bedding, and a locker (6 ft. by 3 ft. by 2 ft.). In these barracks with their small rooms soldiers often have some of their own furnishings: carpets, radiograms, bookshelves, etc. They may be allowed

have no right to opt out of paying it unless they are married and accompanied by their wives. This means that if two men share a room and more men are posted to the unit, they may find that there are now four inhabitants of the same room. The rent deducted from their pay is still the same. We're sure that this would interest the Rent Tribunal!

It is interesting to note that the new barrack blocks which are being built in the UK are still of the same type, allotting six to eight men to each room. It is difficult to explain the depressing lack of privacy which this causes to someone who has never experienced it.

In some pockets where the system is not so rigidly enforced it is because of more liberal-minded officers. The framework of military law enables the rules to be interpreted as the individual commander sees fit, and so he may become a dictator in his own command.

A commander upset at unruly behaviour outside the cookhouse could order his company commanders to see that their men were formed up in three ranks and then marched to the cookhouse, have them all stand to attention outside and go in a file, one at a time, to receive their meal. There are many who would call this a 'good idea'.

Haircuts

The haircut occupies a position of greater significance than the non-soldier could possibly imagine. When a serviceman puts on his civilian clothes and goes out for

a night his haircut is the badge of his job.

Up until about 1965 the ruling in Queen's Rules and Regulations was: 'The hair of the head will be short.' This means that the hair which showed below the hat was close-cropped so that the scalp was visible through it. This notorious haircut was a blocking factor to recruiting figures and so the wording was amended to: 'The hair of the head will be kept neat and tidy.' A Giles cartoon of the time showed long-haired men in uniform and posters of a 'mod' army. All publicity since has given the impression of a new and much changed army in all matters of discipline, and especially haircuts.

What Has Actually Happened

The phrase 'neat and tidy' is obviously ambiguous. The people who enforce such rules are the Warrant Officers and senior NCOs in the unit, and all too often their interpretation of the phrase is the same as it was for 'short'. Here as elsewhere the situation is far worse in the teeth arm, and at its worst in the old, high-discipline units such as the Guards. Here again the length of one's hair will depend on rank. The officers in a regiment are answerable to the CO and, in such matters, the Adjutant. Such people often take a more natural view and wear their hair as dictated by the fashion of their class — the right-wing upper middle class (Heath and Powell don't wear sideburns!). The RSM, to satisfy the CO if nothing else, must demand a higher standard of discipline than the CO. This is also the case for CSMs, and in turn the Companies' Sergeants. This means that the private is

forced to have much shorter hair than anyone else. It is also a matter of how many people one takes orders from. The junior officer who has to answer to two or three seniors has his hair cut to suit the most strict of these. The private who has to answer to 40 to 50 superiors (who are by their position more discipline-minded) must again have his hair cut to the shortest length demanded.

Discipline in such matters is administered through the 'parade'. At Company or Troop level the men are formed up in three ranks, stood to attention and inspected by the Officer, Warrant Officer or Sergeant. Each man in turn is looked at as an article, told his boots or beret aren't clean enough, his buttons aren't done up or he needs a haircut. This ritual is performed each morning; if a soldier is picked up for the same thing two mornings in succession he is in trouble.

In the Field

When a unit (again, mainly teeth arm) takes to the field it is either an 'exercise' or a field camp.

The exercise is a practice for war. Here the technical proficiency of operating the equipment (tanks, guns, radar, etc.) is of paramount importance. Additional conditions, such as the posting of sentries, the forbidding of lights showing from vehicles and the camouflage of vehicles are also simulated. Exercises can be at any level, e.g. Troop, Company, Regimental, Brigade, Divisional or Corps.

The Field Camp is the tent equivalent to barracks: it is the base situated on the ranges or training area from which a unit will go out and do exercises over a period of several weeks.

Since there is no such thing as a 'typical' exercise, there is no need to give a detailed account of any particular one. All the information given below is, however, a typical selection of experiences which are all true to our own knowledge. There is evidence to suggest that condition are generally at their worst overseas.

'All ORs are issued with a sleeping bag and a groundsheet. Sometimes we use our groundsheets to make tents, or else we just sleep under trees or in the trucks. We try to find the driest place, wherever that is. Officers are issued with a camp bed and usually manage to use their rank to get the best place to have their tents put up. Some of the senior officers have vehicles converted into "caravans" with proper mattresses, bedside locker, washbasin and electric lights. These vehicles are usually trailers which should be towed behind Land Rovers or three-ton wagons. They are supposed to carry stores, not officers. When one officer takes up so much space, someone else has to go short; this is always the man at the bottom.'

'On exercises, separate toilets are set up for officers and ORs. They are usually wooden boxes with a hole in the top surrounded by a hessian screen. On one particular exercise a sentry-box sort of construction made of

hardboard, with a hinged door and a comfortable seat was carefully erected in the position. The whole thing was painted with camouflage paint and bore the sign: BRIGADE COMMANDER ONLY.'

'Even on an exercise we have to clean the whole place up when a senior officer is expected to come down on an inspection. They almost stop the exercise to give us the time to have a good shave, clean our boots and shine our brasses. We are even made to go round and pick up all the paper and wash down the vehicles. If a General or someone important is expected to arrive three or four days after an exercise has started, clean uniforms may be brought out so that everyone looks smart. The 'show' then continues at its normal pace so that the General gets the impression that no special preparation has been made for his arrival.'

In the field camp the mess system operates just as it does in the barracks. Marquees are set up for the Officers' and Sergeants' Messes. Officers sleep one or two to a tent; ORs sleep six to a tent of the same size. In the Officers' Mess carpets are placed on the ground, there are armchairs, tables spread with white linen sheets and the Mess silver is very much in evidence. The tables are properly laid and the waiters dress in white shirts and 'best dress' trousers. The bar stocks an extensive range of wines and spirits. In such places some officers exist, comparatively speaking, in luxury. They may well have a proper steel-framed bed, complete with freshly

laundered white sheets and pillow-cases. These beds are made daily by the batmen, who also bring their masters hot water in the mornings, clean all his kit — a very messy job, this, in bad weather — and generally act as a butler or valet-cum-domestic servant. It is no exaggeration to say that many officers are awakened in the morning with a cup of tea.

While such extravagances are lavished on the few, the masses are in a very different position. They queue in the rain for a mess-tin full of stew and two slices of bread. The officers may be eating trout, which, admittedly they pay for themselves (but any attempt for the men to do this would be squashed on the ground that the cooks could not possibly cope with the extra work). When the men have received their own plain fare they will most likely have to stand to eat it; in good weather, of course, they could sit on the ground. In the evening they may be able to buy beer from the cookhouse, but there would be no comfortable place in which to drink it, and no choice would be offered. Arrangements for sleeping would comprise one tent between six men, and a sleeping bag and a groundsheet each. Some of the more experienced soldiers may have brought their own camp beds, but they are always a minority. Conditions in wet and cold weather can often only be compared with the Somme or Verdun; the men squelching around in water and mud two to six inches deep. The officers' mess and tents would most likely be on raised ground, to ensure good drainage. Needless to say, those of the men are always the most badly-drained and many

soldiers have suffered the unenviable experience of being 'washed out' during the night. You may ask why all the men do not bring their own steel beds and extra equipment. The official reply is always that there are never adequate facilities for transporting such unnecessary items for the men.

The ordinary soldier rarely complains of his own poor conditions as he accepts that a fighting force must be prepared to 'rough it'. But they despise their officers for providing such comforts for themselves. And in conditions like these soldiers resent being pulled up by an officer for having dirty boots.

In situations of this nature the officers often have little or no power over their men in circumstances where they cannot hold one particular individual as responsible. The following is an interesting example of this:

'We were out on exercise and were having it pretty rough. The weather was terrible: continuous heavy rain and wind, and there was a lot of mud and puddles around. We had been out for over a week, and everyone was fed up. We'd been working all hours with very little sleep, and tempers were beginning to fray. Anyway, it was just about the last straw when, one night, about eleven o'clock, the CC came round to the beer tent, after everyone had had a few pints, and started giving out jobs to be done by morning; something had to be inspected at seven o'clock, and some JNCOs had to see that it was all done. He ordered the bar to be shut and the men to get on with their jobs, or get to bed. After he had gone back to the officers' mess, there were jeers

and curses from the men. Some of them were rather drunk by this time. It soon became obvious that no one was moving, and the situation was obviously potentially dangerous. The CC could not let it rest there, so he sent for one of the senior NCOs to calm the place down. This was done, tactfully, by a well-respected and esteemed soldier. I am sure there would have been a near-mutiny if any person other than this particular one had handled the situation. If an officer had attempted it, there really would have been trouble.'

It can be seen, in cases where the officers have no direct control over the men, that they rely on the hold they have over the junior ranks, and use these soldiers' influence to maintain discipline. When pushed, the men at the bottom will only follow and co-operate with those they respect.

The Word 'Sir'

A private soldier is known and called only by his name, e.g. 'Smith' or 'Jones'. Between the ranks of Lance Corporal and Staff Sergeant the name of a person is prefixed with his rank, e.g. 'Sergeant Jones', 'Corporal Smith', or else his rank is used alone, e.g. 'Sergeant', 'Staff'. Both juniors and superiors use these terms. Officers from the rank of Warrant Officer II upwards are addressed by their juniors as 'Sir', e.g. a Major will be 'Sir' to a Captain, a Second Lieutenant will be 'Sir' to a Warrant Officer I. All officers are saluted at all times.

An Officer will address a Warrant Officer as 'Sergeant Major'. On the other hand, a senior officer will address junior officers by their Christian names — 'John', 'Frank', etc. In other words, while in the world of the Other Ranks juniors must stand to attention for seniors, the officers are 'all chaps together'.

The system leads to a ridiculous situation where men of 40 with a wealth of experience, have to stand to attention for boys half their age and call them 'Sir'. This is supposed to be essential to discipline. In fact it has nothing to do with real discipline or military efficiency but is just a legacy of the forelock-touching days when the artistocracy ruled all. There is no sound argument against the word 'Sir' being done away with and being replaced by a system of addressing both superiors and juniors by rank, e.g. 'Colonel', 'Lieutenant', 'Sergeant'. Discipline is in any case at present maintained (on behalf of the Officers) entirely by the efforts of Corporals and Sergeants with no such high title.

Dress

The difference between officers and ORs is emphasised in every possible way, one of which is dress.

The normal working dress of the soldier is 'coveralls' (overalls) but this is an article of clothing which is hardly ever worn by officers. In the garments which are more or less the same in style there are always marked differences. The khaki uniform most commonly known

is an example: the officers have a slightly better quality material; the trousers are more tapered and made to measure; brown shoes are worn instead of black, the jacket pockets are cut in a slightly different way; the buttons are bigger, and a 'Sam Brown' belt is worn. The hat is also a different and more pleasing shape.

In the field, when wearing combat suit, the cap badge of the OR is metal and stuck in the beret, whereas that of the officer is embroidered in gold thread, like a blazer badge. They also often wear wellington boots as opposed to normal army issue boots. They carry pistols (a weapon useless to man or beast), when ORs carry an SLR (rifle) or SMG (machine gun).

A strict order of dress is laid down for all ORs and anyone who deviated from it would be punished (e.g. a 'tee' shirt showing beneath an army open-necked shirt). On the other hand the most outlandish forms of dress by officers is seen to be 'madly gay' and a sign of 'character' (e.g. carrying a riding crop instead of a cane, and wearing a cape).

This separatism from the ORs goes hand in hand with the caste solidarity of the officers. In civilian clothes an officer is always instantly recognisable. They are the only people who wear trilbies without overcoats. They can always be identified by their cavalry twill trousers, sports jackets, checked shirts and usually, some form of club tie. If you see a group of officers in civilian clothes they will all be wearing the same type of dress, be it sports jacket, suit, or camel coat. About a year ago there was a photograph of a group of 10 to 12 young

men in black suits, white shirts, bowler hats and carrying umbrellas. The hats were all raised to the same level, height and angle, with the right hand. The occasion was the trooping of the colour and the young men were all off-duty Guards Officers. A group of officers might *all* have Peugeot 404 cars, or Golden Labrador dogs.

'Bull' and Mismanagement

'Bull' is the result of mismanagement. As we have already stated, both are at their worst in the teeth arm, since support arm units are often engaged in performing their normal function.

In terms of basic economics, the factors of production are plant, capital and labour. In the normal teeth arm unit the amount of labour is fixed at a level suitable for performing its war-time role. In the normal day-to-day running of a unit, therefore, a lack of plant and capital is made up for by a mass application of labour. Mismanagement and inefficiency are the results of the most expendable commodity being manpower.

For example, the sweeping of roads, barrack squares, vehicle parks and garages is always done — overseas at any rate — by men with brushes. The average company-strength unit will employ about 200 man-hours each week on this, whereas if machinery were introduced one man could do a better job on his own in less than 40 hours per week. It is mismanagement that wastes this time, but it is the 'bull' of the RSM that insists on such a ridiculously high standard of 'cleanliness'.

ABOVE: SOLDIERS FEEDING
RIGHT: OFFICERS DINING

The average unit will have approximately the following number of men on 24-hour duty at any one time (i.e. all through the night).

Duty	*Rank*	*No. of Men*
Field Officer	Captain or Major	1
Orderly Officer	2nd Lieutenant	1
Orderly Sergeant		1
Guard	JNCOs	2
	Privates	6
Fire Picket	JNCO	1
	Privates	6
Drivers	Privates	2
Recovery	JNCO	1
	Privates	2
Cook	JNCO or Private	1
Orderly NCO	JNCO (1 per Company)	4–5
Telephonist	Private (1 per Company)	4–5
HQ Clerk	JNCO or Private	1
NAAFI Canteen Orderly	JNCO	1
Medical Orderly	JNCO or Private	1
Ambulance Driver	Private	1
Orderly Officer	Sergeant or Lieutenant (1 per Company)	4–5
Barman (Officers' Sergeants' and JNCOs' Messes	Private or JNCO (until midnight)	3
Petrol Pump Attendant	JNCO or Private	1
	TOTAL	44–47

24-hour duties may or may not include the normal working day; e.g. they could be from 08.00 hours on a week-day to 08.00 hours the following day, or from 13.00 hours on a Saturday to 13.00 hours on Sunday. For many of these duties there is no sleep to be had until they are finished. Should one be fortunate enough to get some sleep, it will hardly ever be more than four hours at the outside.

Many of these duties could be dispensed with altogether as they serve no practical purpose (e.g. Orderly Officer, NCO, telephonist, one driver and a cook: 12-15 men).

Also, if the Guard were not dressed up in their best kit but wore combat suit (as in some units they do), men could be saved by the combination of the duties of fire picket, NAAFI canteen orderly and petrol pump attendant (= eight men).

Why are such cuts not initiated? Because the men are paid by the 24-hour day, cannot complain about the conditions of their work, and are therefore in abundant supply to be used generously.

The amount of work involved in these duties also varies; from the mild irritation of having to say where you can be contacted (for officers) to the exasperating necessity of remaining fully dressed, awake and alert (for JNCOs and privates).

The requirements of 'bull' to reach a high standard often results in the extravagant use of materials (usually illegally) by the men to save their time (which no one else considers important).

For example: when the vehicles were of the old green paint type it was always the practice to clean them with a mixture of petrol and oil. This gave the appearance of a very clean vehicle; it was quick; it was bull. An average of two gallons per vehicle was used and each truck was cleaned in this way between 15-20 times a year. This, at current market prices, works out at about £10 per vehicle per year. Taken on the vast scale of the army, this must have totalled many thousands of pounds.

Most teeth arm units are now converted to the new camouflage paint. This has not stopped the mad waste. The crazy ideas of the 'bullshitters' still demand immaculately clean vehicles, and as the new paint cannot be cleaned with petrol and oil the answer is to touch up the spray each time. This is equally expensive in wasted paint.

The annual Admin. inspection has already been mentioned with regard to the waste of paint but here is just one more example:

'In our unit all the floors in the corridors and stores were painted with red lead. This was a total area about equal to that of a football pitch. The occasion was a pre-Admin. inspection by the CO. This, however, was two weeks before the Admin. day, and in the course of the following two weeks about three-quarters of this area had to be re-painted; reason — bull.'

If one considers paint to be a preservative, then there was no need to paint at all. Had the CO said that he did not expect to see floors painted for his inspection then

they need only have been done once. It is not that it is laid down anywhere that floors MUST be painted. What sets the ball rolling is that Company Commander (A) decides to have his floors painted to be one up. Therefore CCs (B), (C) and (D) do the same to keep pace. From that time on it is the accepted thing that floors should be painted. Usually the idea came to CC (A) because Troop Commander (X) saw one of his sergeants doing it to his stores, and therefore his whole troop had to do it.

The pattern is clear. Bull escalates from the bottom and is then assumed to be the norm from the top. One soldier summed up the process as follows: 'On every Admin. I have done we have bulled to the same level as the previous year, plus something new.'

This pattern will continue until some officer has the courage to say 'No more.'

All this senseless work takes time, and, due to bad management, some units work from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. for a month before Admin. In addition to this the single men must prepare their rooms for the inspection, which often means working into the small hours of the morning.

The posters say 'You're never doing the same thing twice in the Army' or 'Something different every day'. This is true. Owing to the fact that nothing is being produced there is no sense of direction in the teeth arm. There are so many duties and fatigues to provide; various departments 'phone up and demand something that draws on the manpower resource of a troop (RSM

wants two men to escort a prisoner, BSM wants an extra man on sweeping roads, an officer wants a driver to take him somewhere, 10 men per troop for Padre's Hour, a vehicle to go to workshops, CC thinks certain vehicles are dirty, send a man to the sergeants' mess to wash dishes, get some bodies together to cut the grass, that man needs a haircut, send him to get one at once, one man to bat for Lt. X, the toilets need to be cleaned again, etc.). The officers and WOs walk around in their best uniforms demanding all these things straight away. They tell the sergeants, who in turn tell the JNCOs to make sure that the jobs are done. They in turn tell the privates to do one job one minute and another the next. The private gets fed up with being messed about and takes very little interest in anything among the pile of half-finished tasks. He lives for his beer at night and the next leave.

The Soldier's Charter

1. We demand the absolute right for all servicemen to form soldiers' committees and to join a trade union.

2. It is at Company level (or equivalent) that the soldiers' committees should be set up in the first instance. Each committee would then represent a hundred or more men, with the Chairmen of the different committees forming a higher committee at Regimental level. Company (or equivalent) elections should take place,

say, every six months. There should be one man, one vote, with all officials subject to immediate right of recall, and with at least the Chairmen of each committee being 'fulltime' — i.e. freed from other duties.

3. One of the most bitter complaints of soldiers is that the 'fatigue' system can be abused (and often is) by officers wishing to discriminate against individuals. It is 'official' army policy that dirty jobs (cleaning latrines, etc.) should be spread out evenly. To ensure that this is done, each Commanding Officer must, in our view, be required to keep a book that records every fatigue that each man is doing. The soldiers' committee to have daily access to this book to ensure fair play. People who think they are being victimised may take their grievance to the committee. The soldiers' committee should also ensure that the book is made up ahead of schedule: for example, we would like it to see that all duties in excess of normal working hours are written in with a minimum of 24 hours' notice, with at least one week's notice for any duty in excess of 24 hours' duration (e.g. an order to take a vehicle to a distant town or camp) and a month's notice where a duty involves being sent away for more than a week (e.g. a long exercise or course).

4. The Soldiers' Committee should have access at any time to the Company Commander who must give a decision on an issue within 24 hours. If that decision should prove unacceptable to the Committee, then the case may be taken up by the Regimental Soldiers' Committee, which would have immediate right of access to

the Commanding Officer. If he does nothing, or his decision is not accepted, then the Soldiers' Union nationally may take up the matter and sanction a work-to-rule until satisfaction is obtained.

5. 'Military crimes' are 'crimes' that would not be considered such in civilian life — e.g. insubordination, failure to salute an officer, disobedience, threatening a superior or 'conduct prejudicial to good order and military discipline'. The greatest number of these are dealt with by the Company Commander or Commanding Officer (i.e. Courts Martial are rare); the object is not to establish justice but to maintain and enforce discipline. Perhaps this explains why we have never known such a case, once brought by a soldier's superior to the CC or CO, dismissed. The first aim of the CC or CO is to 'back up' the person bringing the charge. There is no way to ensure justice, in our view, other than by allowing a Soldiers' Committee representative to be present at Company Commanders' or Commanding Officers' Orders. This representative could advise the accused after the charge had been read and before the 'award' (in civilian language, 'sentence') had been given. If the Soldiers' Committee felt the accused to have been victimised, it would decide on action to be taken in the usual way.

Where an offender is Court Martialled (until such time as a Labour Government can abolish this proceedure altogether) the President of the Court Martial should confine his duties to those of 'Judge' as understood in a

civilian court. There should be a Jury made up of a cross-section of servicemen. This would bring Courts Martial more closely into line with civilian Courts, abolishing the present situation in which the President of the Court Martial (usually a Major in a District Court Martial and a Brigadier in a General Court Martial) performs the functions of both 'Judge' and 'Foreman of Jury'. The accused should have the right to declare a Jury 'biased' if he thought a disproportionate number of officers comprised it. Any complaints of this or any other sort would be taken up by the Soldiers' Committee, which would have a representative and advisor present throughout.

The Soldiers' Committees and the Union should negotiate a full review of the Manual of Military Law, and abolish vaguely-worded 'crimes' such as 'conduct prejudicial to good order and military discipline', etc.

6. Complaints by Officers about subordinates' hair-length are in some cases a form of victimisation and an unnecessary source of friction. There should be negotiated an agreed haircut and hairlength standard, and an illustrated booklet, made up of photographs of appropriate hairstyles, should be published as a guide. Once haircut standards had been set at a sensible level, it would be up to the Soldiers' Committees to be the guardians of this agreement. An enormous amount of unnecessary friction on a petty issue could in this way be avoided. The regulation that 'the hair on the head shall be kept neat and tidy' should mean just that, and not

meant 'short' unless this were the will of the soldiers themselves.

7. The Mess System must be abolished. There should be one dining room for both Officers and Other Ranks, and no segregation of sleeping quarters. There should be a communal social centre with public and saloon bars open to both Officers and Other Ranks alike. The Soldiers' Committees should have a say in the management of this social centre. Advantages would be (a) the abolition or at least reduction of class-discrimination and (b) vast savings in expenditure on quite unnecessary 'luxury' Officers' facilities.

8. A Soldier is entitled to some privacy in his living quarters. Every soldier should have the right which at present only married soldiers have — i.e. the right to a 'home', a room which is his own personal concern, in which he may receive visitors, including those of the opposite sex, and where his furniture, shelves, drawers, etc. are exempt from 'bull' inspections by officers. Nobody inspects the Officers' quarters, and this 'privilege' should be the right of all soldiers.

9. There must be no interference with leisure hours (e.g. starting exercises on Sunday mornings), or, if a day is lost unavoidably, a free day in lieu must be given later in the week. There must be an end to compulsory attendance at sporting and social functions (Officers' parties, etc.). The soldiers' committees would have to act as watchdogs on all these things.

10. Officers' batman facilities should be abolished. If an Officer wants a batman, let him hire a civilian at his own expense instead of being provided a man at the taxpayer's expense. A soldier wants to be a soldier, not an Officer's personal servant whether full-time or part-time. The abolition of all personal servants paid for by the taxpayer would allow soldiers to refuse to bring morning cups of tea to their Officers, scrub their floors, etc.

11. The overall job of the Soldiers' Committees should be to guard against any victimisation or over-zealous enforcement of ambiguous rules. The Committees should act as watchdogs over the Warrant Officers. They should, with assistance from the union nationally, negotiate set and reasonable *standards* of cleanliness, neatness, etc. for all military equipment, including vehicles, garages, outside areas, barrack rooms, accommodation, stores and personal uniforms. Once reasonable standards had been agreed, the role of the Soldiers' Committees would of course be to ensure that they were not overstepped or 'bulled' by over-zealous NCOs. Probably, it would be not only the average soldier's, but also many a taxpayer's opinion that 'bulling' is largely if not wholly a waste of manpower and money. We have made some advances already in the last few years: cases of painting grass green outside the Guardroom, or white-washing piles of coal, are now rare. But enormous savings in manpower and money are still to be made.

12. The enforcement of all these reforms would be im-

possible through mere Parliamentary legislation, unless backed up by organisation on 'the shop floor' as well. In fact, the impetus for change will have to come from below — both in the army itself, and through trade union action from 'outside'.

The first right to establish must be the right to organise. We demand the right of all soldiers to join or form a trade union eligible for affiliation to the Trades Union Congress. This in itself would be a small gain unless the union were democratically run and had real power: the Soldiers' Committees should be the basis of the union on 'the shop floor'. The Committees and the Union should have access to all files except those governed by the Official Secrets Act (which should themselves be abolished by a Labour Government as soon as possible). In addition, servicemen should be free to join political parties, with the right of free assembly, freedom of speech (the right to send letters to the press, etc.) and freedom to publish and circulate journals, leaflets, etc. within the army. There should be vote by post for all ranks whether in the UK or abroad, effectively carried out.

Experience, etc.

'About a year before the General Election of 1970, a note was put on Orders about proxy voting. This was to the effect that forms could be obtained from the company office to enable men to appoint a proxy. I im-

mediately went to the company office to secure one, but was told they had none. I went there three times over the following weeks and each time was given the same answer. Eventually, after pestering RHQ office I was able to get one for myself, but they didn't have any forms for wives. This was early December and according to the date printed on the form I had only a matter of days to get it in to my home constituency. This I did and got a proxy appointed, but was too late to register my wife.

'The whole matter lapsed in my mind until it became obvious that the Election was imminent. I then started to talk with people with the object of getting them to vote Labour. Labour supporters they were to a man, but most of them (about 19 out of 20) had not registered for a proxy, many were not aware whether or not they were on the electoral register, and most of those between 18 and 21 did not know they were allowed to vote.

'Throughout the election campaign nothing was officially said about it by the army authorities, not even that there was to be one. Cut off from Britain, their only contact was the newspapers. Only one copy of each of the three main manifestos was sent to the regiment, and these went straight to the officers' mess. I myself tried to get hold of them through the unit Library (which says it can get any publication) but they could not get them.

'In the period since the election I have talked with many people and have not met one soldier below the rank of sergeant that had, or would have, voted Conservative. I also found that over half the officers I talked

with *had* voted, and voted Conservative (not one had voted Labour, but one who had a proxy abstained as a nil vote). Of the WOs and sergeants, about one in seven to eight had voted. Of those that did so the majority had voted Conservative, but of the ones that didn't a significant majority had been Labour supporters (mainly sergeants).

'It is, therefore, my opinion that of the servicemen stationed outside the UK more voted Tory than Labour. Had there been a 100 per cent forces vote I should estimate it at about 12 to 1 in favour of Labour.

'It is my opinion that the senior officers of the army had made a similar appreciation of the situation as I have laid out above. On this they had not only avoided helping their men by not publicising the election sufficiently, but tried to hamper their chances of getting a proxy appointed by not providing the forms. I have already said that over half of the officers had voted. It is therefore obvious that they were able to get hold of sufficient forms. They have used their position to political ends.

'It is also interesting to note that the By-elections since have received considerably more publicity than the whole of the General Election, and that they even gave the address to write to for those who lived there but didn't know if they were on the electoral register! Both these seats are safe Tory and therefore the officer caste had nothing to lose by showing themselves to be 'terribly democratic'.

'Trade-unionism and the right to free speech and assembly is the only way that such a misuse of power can be avoided in the forces.'

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